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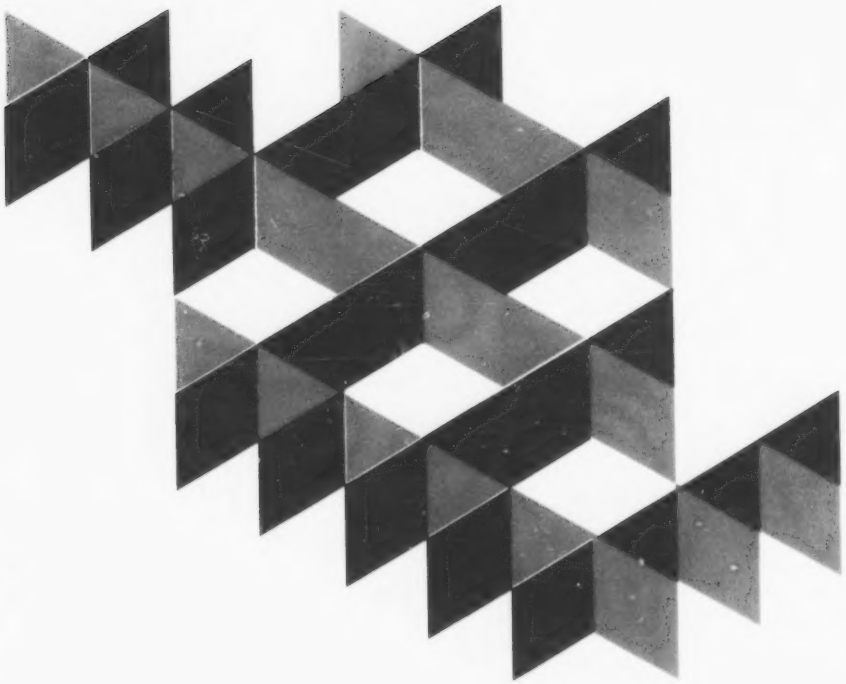
United States Department of State
Bureau of Intelligence and Research

Limits in the Seas

No. 104

MARITIME BOUNDARY:
CUBA - MEXICO



S1.119/5:

This paper is one of a series issued by The Geographer, Bureau of Intelligence and Research of the Department of State. The aim of the series is to set forth the basis for national arrangements for the measurement of marine areas or the division of the maritime areas by coastal states.

Intended for background use only, this research document does not necessarily represent an official acceptance by the United States Government of the line or lines represented on the charts or of the specific principles involved, if any, in the original drafting of the lines. Principal analyst for this study: Robert W. Smith. Additional copies may be requested by mail from The Geographer, Department of State, Washington, D.C. 20520.

LIMITS IN THE SEAS

No. 104

MARITIME BOUNDARY:

CUBA - MEXICO

September 10, 1985

Office of The Geographer
Bureau of Intelligence and Research

MARITIME BOUNDARY: CUBA - MEXICO

On July 26, 1976, the Governments of the Republic of Cuba and the United States of Mexico exchanged notes which constituted an agreement establishing a maritime boundary in the Yucatan Channel which connects the Gulf of Mexico to the Caribbean Sea. The agreement entered into force on this date. A translation of these notes is as follows:

Mexico City, D.F.
July 26, 1976

His Excellency Mr. Fernando Lopez Muino
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Cuba
Mexico City, D.F.

Mr. Ambassador,

As the result of the talks held between representatives of Mexico and Cuba concerning the delimitation of each country's sea space in those areas where the two countries' respective sea spaces adjoin by virtue of the establishment by Mexico of an Exclusive Economic Zone and the possible future creation by Cuba of a similar Exclusive Economic Zone (or its equivalent), by instructions of my government I have the honor to propose to your Excellency the following:

1. The Government of Mexico and the Government of Cuba agree to establish, on the basis of the principle of equidistance, a dividing line between the Exclusive Economic Zone of Mexico and sea space that will become the Economic Zone of Cuba (or the equivalent thereof).

2. The dividing line to which the foregoing paragraph 1 refers shall be defined as the great-circle arcs joining the points whose geographical coordinates, so far as can be determined from the best information available, are the following:

Point No.	Latitude North	Longitude West
1	24° 56' 28.83"	86° 56' 16.69"
2	23° 30' 31.50"	86° 24' 14.70"
3	23° 26' 54.30"	86° 22' 33.80"
4	22° 45' 32.80"	86° 06' 55.00"
5	22° 18' 55.80"	86° 00' 35.20"
6	21° 41' 31.50"	85° 52' 43.40"
7	21° 36' 00.10"	85° 51' 18.20"
8	21° 35' 20.90"	85° 51' 09.30"
9	20° 49' 36.40"	85° 32' 23.10"
10	20° 17' 46.70"	85° 07' 24.25"
11	20° 04' 37.10"	84° 57' 56.30"
12	19° 39' 16.60"	84° 42' 46.50"
13	19° 32' 25.80"	84° 38' 30.66"

3. The dividing line is shown, for purposes of illustration, on the chart appended to this note.

4. The dividing line shall also serve as the dividing line between the Mexican and Cuban portions of the continental shelf, where such shelf exists.

5. Agreement on the items referred to in the foregoing paragraphs 1 to 4 does not affect the positions or conceptions of either of the two Governments in matters relating to the law of the sea other than the delimitation of sea spaces to which this Agreement refers.

I ask your Excellency that, if the above points merit the approval of your government, please inform me so that this note, and your Excellency's note, in reply, constitute a formal agreement, again between the United States of Mexico and the Republic of Cuba.

I take this opportunity to renew the assurance of my highest and most distinguished consideration.

(Signed)
Alfonso Garcia Robles
Secretary of External Affairs

The following is a translation of the reply of the Government of the Republic of Cuba:

Embassy of the Republic of Cuba
Mexico City, D.F.

Note No. 190/76

Mexico City, D.F.
July 26, 1976

Lic. Alfonso Garcia Robles
Minister of External Affairs
Mexico City, D.F.

Your Excellency,

As the result of the talks held between representatives of Mexico and Cuba concerning the delimitation of each country's sea space in those areas where the two countries' respective sea space adjoin by virtue of the establishment by Mexico of an Exclusive Economic Zone and the possible future creation by Cuba of a similar Economic Zone (or its equivalent), and in reply to Your Excellency's kind note, I am honored to inform you that my Government has approved the following items which were proposed in that note:

(Paragraphs 1 to 5 are identical to the Mexican note printed above.)

I would ask that this note be accepted as the reply to the note from Your Excellency, in order that the two might together constitute a formal Agreement between the Republic of Cuba and the United States of Mexico.

I take this opportunity to renew the assurances of my highest and most distinguished consideration.

(Signed)
Fernando Lopez Muino
Ambassado of Cuba

ANALYSIS

The negotiated maritime boundary is depicted on the attached illustrative map produced for this study. The straight-line segments connecting the boundary turning points are rhumb lines on this map; article 2 of the agreement, however, specifies that the actual boundary segments are to be great-circle arcs. 1/ Geographical measurements used in this analysis may differ from official calculations owing to the use of different references, such as charts, basepoints, or datums.

The maritime boundary consists of 13 turning or terminal points with the distance between respective points ranging from 0.7 miles (between points 7 and 8) to 90.8 miles (between points 1 and 2). 2/ The boundary, 352 miles in total length, runs in a general southeast-northwest direction from the Caribbean Sea through the Yucatan Channel into the Gulf of Mexico. The water depths in the immediate vicinity of the boundary range from about 550 fathoms (3,300 feet) near turning point 4 to more than 2,400 fathoms (14,000 feet) from turning point 9 south to point 13.

The two governments have delimited their maritime boundary on the basis of an equidistant line whereby the line separating their respective marine jurisdictions is equally distant from the two coastlines. Although Cuba has claimed straight baselines, from which it measures the territorial sea and other national maritime zones, it appears that the straight baselines themselves have not been used in calculating the equidistant line (see Table 1). Small offshore islands and cays have been used as basepoints in determining the equidistant line.

In the northwest the boundary begins at point 1, some 200 miles from Cabo Catoche on the Mexican Yucatan peninsula and from an unnamed cay north of Cabo San Antonio in the southwest part of Cuba. Turning points 6, 7, and 8, situated in the center of the Yucatan Channel, represent that portion of the boundary at which the two states are closest; here, Cabo San Antonio is about 105 miles east of the Mexican island of Contoy. The southeast terminus, point 13, is almost 133 miles

from the two coasts. A point approximately 2 miles further south would be equidistant from Cuba, Mexico, and Honduras (Swan Island).

The agreement states that the boundary shall divide Mexico's exclusive economic zone (which it claimed on July 31, 1976) and Cuba's "sea space that will become the Economic Zone of Cuba (or the equivalent thereof)." Subsequent to this agreement, Cuba on February 26, 1977, claimed an exclusive economic zone. Both states' zones extend to a maximum-allowed 200 miles.

NOTES

1. A rhumb line is a line on the surface of the earth making the same angle with all meridians, a loxodromic curve spiraling toward the poles in a constant angle direction. On a Mercator projection (used primarily for nautical charts), a rhumb line appears as a straight line thereby making it useful for mariners. A great circle is a circle on the surface of the earth, the plane of which passes through the center of the earth. All meridians of longitude and the Equator are great circles. Only on a Gnomonic projection do all straight lines represent arcs of great circles.

2. All references to miles in this study are to nautical miles. One nautical mile equals 1,852 meters.

Table 1

CUBA - MEXICO
MARITIME BOUNDARY

Turning/ Terminal Point	Distance Between Boundary Pts. (nm)	Nearest Cuban Territory*	Distance Land to Boundary Pt. (nm)		Nearest Mexican Territory**
1		Unnamed cay (Pt.9)	200.3	200.2	Cabo Catoche
	90.8				
2		Unnamed cay on Banco Sancho Pardo (Pt.6)	119.9	120.6 120.5	Cabo Catoche Isla Contoy-1
	4.4				
3		Unnamed cay on Banco Sancho Pardo (Pt.6)	116.5	117.3 117.3	Isla Contoy-1 Mainland
	43.8				
4		Unnamed cay on Banco Sancho Pardo (Pt.6)	83.7	83.0 83.0	Isla Contoy-1 Isla Contoy-2
		Cabo San Antonio-1 (Pt.3)	83.7		
	27.3				
5		Cabo San Antonio-2 (Pt.1)	64.6	64.6 64.6	Isla Contoy-1 Isla Contoy-2
	38.1				
6		Cabo San Antonio-2 (Pt.1)	52.6	52.3 52.3	Isla Contoy-3 Isla Contoy-4
		Cabo San Antonio-3 (Pt.124)	52.6		
		Cabo San Antonio-4 (Pt.123)	52.6		
	5.7				

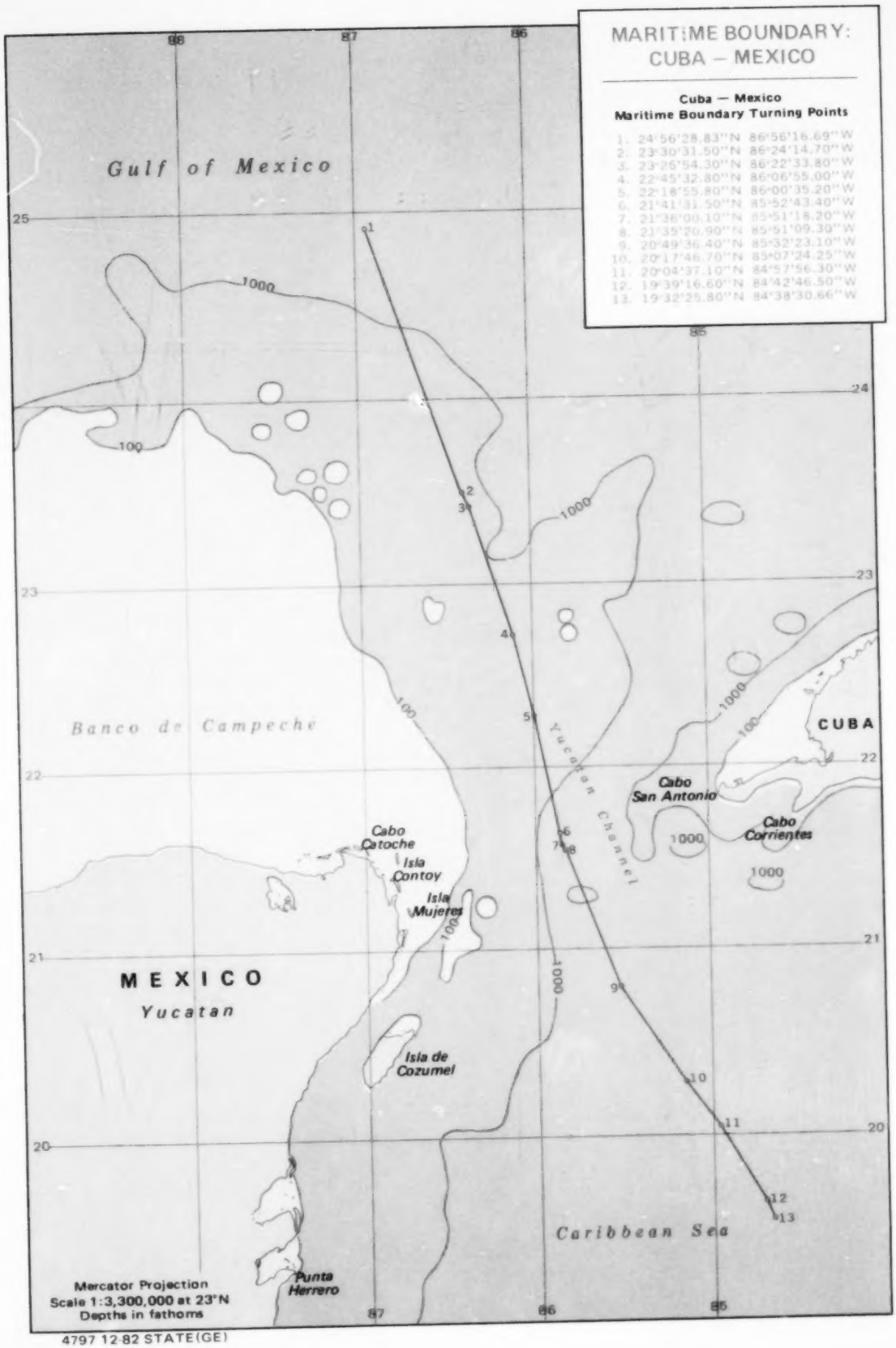
Table 1 (continued)

CUBA - MEXICO
MARITIME BOUNDARY

Turning/ Terminal Point	Distance Between Boundary Pts. (nm)	Nearest Cuban Territory*	Distance Land to Boundary Pt. (nm)		Nearest Mexican Territory**
7		Cabo San Antonio-3 (Pt.124)	52.7	52.5	Isla Contoy-4
		Cabo San Antonio-4 (Pt.123)	52.7		
	0.7				
8		Cabo San Antonio-3 (Pt.124)	52.7	52.6	Isla Contoy-4
		Cabo San Antonio-4 (Pt.123)	52.7		
	49.0				
9		Pta.Perpetua (Pt.119)	69.2	67.2	Cozumel-1
	39.4				
10		Pta.Perpetua (Pt.119)	92.5	91.4	Cozumel-2
		Pta.del Holandes (Pt.117)	92.5		
	15.9				
11		Cabo Corrientes (Pt.115)	103.7	103.4	Cozumel-2
				103.4	Cozumel-3
	29.1				
12		Cabo Corrientes (Pt.115)	126.3	126.0	Cozumel-3
	7.8				
13		Cabo Corrientes (Pt.115)	132.7	132.6	Cozumel-3
Total	352.0				

* Basepoints taken from Cuban Decree-Law 1 of February 24, 1977. Numbers in parentheses refer to specific basepoints listed in this law.

** Basepoints taken from U.S. charts.



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